Emma Bransen Sonksen, as told to Maxine Durney, March 1989, and revised December 12, 1989

My parents, John and Dorothea Jacobsen Bransen, came from Denmark, from the island of Amager near Copenhagen. That island now supports the airport for Copenhagen, and is connected to the city by bridge.

My father came to Petaluma in 1908. My mother came at about the same time to visit her sister. My father and mother, who were married here, had the Gale ranch on Stony Pt Rd, near Stony Point School, about a mile north of the intersection of Stony Point and Gravenstein Highway. I was born in 1911 and went to first grade at Stony Point.

We moved to Bloomfield, where we had 4000 chickens, and cows as well. There were four of us children. My mother died when I was twelve, and later a fire destroyed our beautiful, large Victorian home.

I rode my horse "Dick" to Bloomfield to school, where there was a stable for our horses. In the afternoon he galloped up our lane when we reached home.

We sold the place to Fred Wilson, and it is now the Diamond W. Ranch.

My father purchased, in 1928 or 1929, our place on Wiegand Hill, seventy two acres, at the foot of the grade, nestled in the hollow on the left, as you are going uphill, on Bodega avenue toward Two Rock. Roy Church sold it to us, and he was buying it from someone named Rossi. A building there had been a road house, before Prohibition, and the bar in that building was still intact when we moved there. Martin Janson lived across the street.

It was 72 acres, with four big chicken houses as well as colony houses. We had 6500 chickens on that place.

Inside the houses, there was a walkway for the chickens, that they walked along behind the nests. They could go into the nest from behind. The nest was covered, and it was dark in there. When we gathered the eggs we were in front of the row of nests, and we lifted a long lid that covered them.

I had my own horse, and can remember one day, when I was about 14, that I accompanied my cousin, Harold Jacobsen, up the hill to gather eggs. I was on my horse, and he was driving the farm horse, who was pulling the farm wagon. When we finished the egg gathering I challenged him to a race."A race against the eggs" we always called it later. Off we went, down the hill, and you can imagine what

happened to the eggs. We lost the day's gathering, but my father must have been amused. He didn't scold.

We also grew potatoes. During the Depression father exchanged potatoes for canned foods, cases of corn and tomatoes and beans, in Santa Rosa, and in Petaluma, at the grocery stores. In Petaluma he also traded for haircuts.

I remember the Indians who came to dig the potatoes, in season. They went from place to place, bringing their heavy tents, and I can remember the smell of their campfires. We'd go down to visit their camp and talk to them. They came back year after year, in August.

I remember planting kale. You'd take a whole handful of plants, one fellow put the shovel in the ground, pulled it back, and the other person put the plant in. The shovel was pushed back, and the second person stepped on it, put his foot close to the plant, to hold it in place as the shovel was withdrawn. We bought the kale in lots of 100.

I remember spraying the colony houses for lice. We had a sled with a 50 gallon drum of diesel oil and crysallic acid. I would pump by hand and my father would take a large hose into the colony house. I loved the smell of it.

My father taught me what he knew of cooking, but I didn't cook meals such as Mother had provided. I did the cleaning and washing on Saturdays. Later, when I was in high school, and invited to a football game on a Saturday,, I had to ask my friend to explain the game to me. I had never had time to go to a game.

On Sunday afternoons sometimes we'd go visiting, or people would visit us. I'd have a cake...

When I finished high school I went to Sweet's Business College in Santa Rosa. My father let me drive the family car to Santa Rosa, and I had three passengers. We took the Petaluma Hill Road.

Being a farmer's daughter, and my father a member of Poultry Producers, I got a job there, at the Poultry Producers, in 1932. My father bought me a Durant coupe, used. I called it "Lovable", and I paid him back $10.00 a month.

At the Poultry Producers I was paid $11.00 a week and enjoyed one free day a week. The NRA, Roosevelt's National Recovery Act, meant to me that to hold a job I had to take one day off in the middle of the week as well; but the pay remained the same. This was an attempt to make it possible tohire more workers. At the same time no married

couple could both work. One breadwinner to a family was the idea. However sisters could both work, as did Hilda Tiemann and her sister.

My first job was in the egg department, where I worked as a clerk doing egg tags. These were tags collected from the candlers, and from these were made out the records for the individual farmers. That's how the farmers were paid for the eggs they'd brought in.

I was married in 1934, and was away for ten years. When I returned I was placed in the feed department where I was one of two bookkeepers. We had two big Burroughs bookkeeping machines to work with.

By 1958 there were changes being demanded of the egg producers, such as cooling the eggs before bringing them in to be candled. "Why refrigerate eggs" was a pamphlet distributed by Poultry Producers in 1958. The market was getting picky; to meet the demands farmers were changing diet of the chickens. Some farmers were beginning to go to cages, and it was the beginning of the end of the industry.

In 1958 Poultry Producers of Central California moved to San Leandro (the biggest mistake they ever made), and in 1963 became Pacific Growers. By 1965 Poultry Producers was getting top heavy in management, and new managers introduced new methods. None of it worked, and it came to an end.

I had advanced to cashier for the feed department, when I was let go, by seniority, I guess, in 1968. I then worked for the municipal court in Sonoma, for ten years, before I retired..

# # #

Oral History Program

Conditional Release Agreement

For and in consideration of the participation by the Petaluma Historical Museum in any programs involving the dissemination of ~~tape-recorded~~ memoirs and oral history material for publication, copyright, and other uses, I hereby release all right, title, or interest in any and to all of my ~~tape-recorded~~ memoirs to the Petaluma Historical Museum subject to the following stipulations:

PLACE Petaluma

DATE Oct. 11 - 1990.

Emma Lee Kerr
(Interviewee)

Maxine Swezey
(for the Petaluma Historical Museum)

PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Oral History Program
Narrator Personal Information Questionnaire

Name SONKSEN EMMA MARGUERITE Brandes
Last First Middle (Maiden)

Address 717 N McDowell Blvd H-501
Petaluma, Ca 94954

Marital status: Married___ Single___ Divorced X Widowed___

Birthdate 9-30-11 Birthplace Kobar.

Length of residence in Petaluma (or Sonoma County) 79

Education: Elementary school Bloomfield Grammer School

Secondary school Petaluma High School Grad___

College___ Grad___

Other___

Occupation(s) or former occupations(s) Poultry Producer & Central California, Municipal Court of Sonoma Co.

Travels Denmark

Organizations, clubs Danish Society- Hannebrog Gl
California and Nevada - Manner #4 - Petaluma Chapter

Other special interests___

Additional comments___

THANK YOU!

PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Oral History Program
Family History Questionnaire

	Name	Birthdate	Birthplace	Deceased? Date
Parents*	Dorothea Jacobsen Bransen	5-17-87	Denmark	1935
	John L. Bransen	5-24-88	Denmark	1951
Brothers & ~~Sisters~~	John Bransen Jr.			
	Sisters: Anna Bransen Strouse			
	Dorothy Bransen Harris			
Grand-parents*	Jon Isbrandtsen			
	Peder Jakobsen			
Spouse	n/a			
Children	~~n/a~~ none			
Grandchildren				

*Please include maiden name of mother and grandmothers.

THANK YOU!